

MONTANA RURAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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EXHIBIT 4
DATE 3/16/2011
HB 603



DATE: Wednesday, March 16, 2011
TO: Chairman Scott Reichner and House Education Committee Members
FROM: Dave Puyear
SUBJECT: MREA's Opposition to HB 603

I apologize for missing today's Hearing on HB 603. MREA has numerous concerns with the bill. Here are the major issues repeatedly voiced by our members:

District Boundary Issues

HB 603 does not address a number of district boundary issues that are certain to arise should it be passed and implemented. Allowing students to cross district boundaries to attend a charter school without at least some parameters in this area will place Montana on the same "collision course" for problems that have taken place in other states.

"Cherry Picking" Issues

If charter schools are permitted to recruit and enroll only a select group of Montana's brightest and best, using public funding (it is our understanding that per-student "ANB" funding would follow the child) our remaining public schools will be forced to deal with a greater concentration of high-risk students that can be much more costly to serve.

School Choice

Proponents of HB 603 have continually noted the value of school choice, yet, Montana is already in a very unique and effective position in addressing this issue in virtually every area of the state. Because the large majority of our schools do not charge tuition and the value of the ANB funding that already is attached to each student, most schools in Montana are eager and willing to accept out-of-district students. Students in Montana already experience a great deal of flexibility in being able to move from one district to another.

In conclusion, MREA was provided not opportunity for input prior to HB 603 being introduced. If indeed there is a sincere desire to expand Montana's charter school options without seriously damaging our current public schools, we suggest that in the future, the sponsor and proponents should consider actually including representatives from the K-12 school community in the actual bill drafting process.